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(54) **Dynamic hardware controls with haptic and visual feedback**

Dynamische Hardware-Steuerungen mit haptischem und visuellem Feedback

Commandes matérielles dynamiques avec un retour visuel et haptique

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(73) Proprietor: **Sony Corporation
Tokyo (JP)**

(72) Inventors:
• **Johansson, Magnus
244 71 Dösjebro (SE)**

• **Hunt, Alexander
218 72 Tygelsjö (SE)**

(74) Representative: **Neij & Lindberg AB
Pedellgatan 11
224 60 Lund (SE)**

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Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to a mobile electronic device and to a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls in a mobile electronic device.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] Today, in mobile electronic devices, there are generally two variants of buttons, normal physical, hardware buttons and touch buttons. The hardware buttons are defined per product basis and are specific for just that type of device and they are not changed once defined.

[0003] The touch buttons are totally custom and may vary per application and use case basis. The touch buttons however lack the physical feedback compared to the hardware buttons. They are also limited to the display area of the device.

[0004] There is therefore a need for a mobile electronic device that is provided with dynamic hardware controls providing haptic feedback to a user and which position and function is customizable.

[0005] The prior art comprises US2007/0152982 which discloses an input device for providing a clicking feeling by a user by controlling the stiffness of a button pressed by the user, where the button may be formed by an actuator comprising an electro-active polymer layer and a plurality of electrodes contacting the electro-active polymer.

[0006] The prior art also comprises US2010/0321330 which discloses a touch panel comprising a first substrate, and a second substrate spaced from the first substrate by a distance and having a contact surface. A fluid is filled in a gap between the first and second substrates, and an input button area is delimited due to movement of the fluid when a driving voltage is applied.

[0007] In WO2008/125130 a thin keypad provides for touch input, pressure input and haptic feedback and includes a top surface layer, a light guide layer, a capacitive sensing layer and a piezo layer.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] With the above description in mind, then, an aspect of the present invention is to provide a mobile electronic device that comprises dynamic hardware controls and a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls in a mobile electronic device to provide the ability for a user or software to adapt the position, appearance and function of dynamic hardware controls on at least one side of a mobile electronic device depending on use case scenario and further enabling the dynamic hardware controls to disappear when not used.

[0009] With the above description in mind, then, an object of the present disclosure is to provide a device and

a method for dynamic hardware controls in a mobile electronic device, which seeks to mitigate, alleviate, or eliminate one or more of the above-identified deficiencies in the art and disadvantages singly or in any combination.

[0010] These and further objects are achieved by a mobile electronic device as claimed.

[0011] By providing a mobile electronic device with dynamic hardware controls comprising deformable segments being controlled by a control unit in correspondence or as a response to pressure on an underlying pressure sensitive film, an efficient, intuitive and precise way of enabling a user or software of a mobile electronic device to generate dynamic hardware control(s) in desired positions on at least one side of the mobile electronic device is achieved and that further enables a user to perform inputs on dynamic hardware control(s) in desired positions on at least one side of the mobile electronic device. A user of the mobile electronic device comprising dynamic hardware controls can thereby be easily customize the functions of each dynamic hardware control according to preference and situation and the dynamic hardware controls can provide physical feedback to the user when pressed. Furthermore, the at least one side of the mobile electronic device will appear as it has no hardware buttons, when the deformable segment(s) are in a non-deformed state, making the general appearance of the mobile electronic device more esthetically pleasing.

[0012] By the invention a mobile electronic device is provided wherein the electroactive polymer film is transparent, and configured to function as a light guide for at least one light source comprised within the mobile electronic device in order to illuminate the at least one deformable segment. By providing a electroactive polymer film functioning as a light guide for light emitted from a light source, the number of light sources and related components can be kept at a minimum while still maintaining a sufficient illumination of the deformed deformable segments. By minimizing the number of light sources, less battery power is needed for the illumination of the deformable segments.

[0013] By the invention a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein the deformable segments in the electroactive polymer film, when deformed, are configured to redirect the light outwards at an angle against the outer surface of the electroactive polymer that is sufficient to ensure the light can escape out of the electroactive polymer film and become visible to a user. By allowing the deformation of the deformable segments to redirect the light outwards, no further component is needed for light redirection and a deformed deformable segment will thereby simultaneously as the deformation occurs also be illuminated to a user.

[0014] According to another aspect of the invention a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein the pressure sensitive film comprises a plurality of pressure sensing segments each segment being configured to detect an individual pressure on a predetermined portion of a

side of the mobile electronic device and wherein the electroactive polymer film comprises a plurality of deformable segments. By providing a plurality of pressure sensing segment, each scanning for pressures on a predetermined portion of a side of the mobile electronic device, a way of individually controlling a plurality of deformable segments simultaneously in correspondence to a pressure applied on each of said pressures sensing segment is provided.

[0015] According to yet another aspect of the invention a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein each pressure sensing segment is a parallel plate capacitor or a resistive sensor capable of detecting contact pressure of an object in contact with a portion of the mobile electronic device.

[0016] According to a further aspect of the invention a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein a plurality of the deformable segments are arranged in desired positions on at least one side of the mobile electronic device aligned with positions of underlying corresponding pressure sensing segments and wherein the deformable segments are arranged to individually deform such that they together with underlying pressure sensing segments form dynamic hardware controls on at least one side of the mobile electronic device. By aligning deformable segments and pressure sensing segments, each arranged in a predetermined position on a side of the mobile electronic device, it is possible to form dynamic hardware controls in which a deformation of a deformable segment can be precisely controlled in correspondence to a pressure detected by an underlying pressure sensing segment.

[0017] According to another aspect of the invention a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein each deformable segment is dimensioned to be smaller than an underlying corresponding pressure sensitive segment. By making the deformable segments slightly smaller than the underlying pressure sensing segments, a higher accuracy in the pressure detection is achieved that can be achieved attributed to the reduction of air gaps etc.

[0018] According to a further aspect of the invention a mobile electronic device is provided wherein the deformable segments in the electroactive polymer film comprises at least one perforation in at least an outer conductive coating layer that allows light to escape through the conductive coating layer and become visible to a user. In a scenario, in which the conductive coating layer is not transparent, it is necessary to provide perforations in the conductive coating layer to allow light to be visible to a user. The perforations may be of any suitable shape e. g. indicating a function of the button or be small enough not to be visible to the naked eye but still letting light pass through.

[0019] An example of a mobile electronic device is provided wherein the mobile electronic device further comprises a light guide layer being transparent and functioning as a light guide for at least one light source and wherein the light guide layer is positioned outside and adjacent

to the electroactive polymer film and wherein the light guide layer is attached to the electroactive polymer film and configured to redirect the light outwards at an angle against the outer surface of the light guide layer that is sufficient to ensure the light can escape out through the outer surface of the light guide layer and become visible to a user. By providing a light guide layer specifically adapted for guiding light that does not have to function as an electroactive polymer film, higher efficiency and less losses of light can be achieved. This translates into a lowering of the requirements on the light sources, allowing the number of light sources to be reduced and/or the strength of the light sources to be lowered.

[0020] The above and further objects are also achieved by a method as claimed for controlling dynamic hardware controls on a mobile electronic device.

[0021] The scanning of the pressure sensitive film is performed by the control unit receiving and analyzing signals from the pressure sensitive film corresponding to a pressure on the pressure sensing film wherein the scanning may be performed at a certain frequency depending on a mode of the mobile electronic device.

[0022] The method for controlling deformable segments as a response to and in correspondence to a detected pressure provides dynamic hardware controls on at least one side of a mobile electronic device that can be accurately controlled and adapted according to the pressure applied to the deformable segment. Furthermore is a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls provided, that enables dynamic hardware controls to appear when desired and temporarily assume the shape and feel of a traditional button and automatically disappear when reset or deactivated simulating the feeling of a mechanical hardware button.

[0023] By the invention a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls on a mobile electronic device is provided wherein the method further comprises resetting said deformable segment to a non deformed state by removing the applied voltage, when the control unit has determined that a pressure threshold is reached based on the received signals from the pressure sensing film, and executing a software key input event in said mobile electronic device directly after or simultaneously as the removal of the applied voltage. Said software key input event may be executed continuously if the pressure that is detected by the pressure sensitive film is maintained after the resetting of the deformable segment until the pressure is removed. The resetting of the deformable segment by removal of the voltage applied over said deformable segment provides a user with a feel and feedback of pressing a mechanical button. By the execution of a software key input event, a pressing of a deformed deformable segment can be coupled to a software key input event, e.g. raising the volume of a speaker, in the mobile electronic device. The user may execute the software key input event by pressing the deformed deformable segment until it collapses by the removal of the applied voltage upon which the software key input event

will be executed, simulating a mechanical button. Thereby can the customization ability of touch buttons be combined with the feel and feedback of hardware mechanical buttons.

[0024] By the invention a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls on a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein the method further comprises switching on a light source to illuminate the deformable segment when the deformable segment is deformed and switching off the light source when the deformable segment is reset. By activating and deactivating, i.e. switching on and off, a light source as the deformable segment is deformed, the deformable segment is illuminated to a user while minimizing the activated time of the light source.

[0025] According to a further aspect of the invention a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls on a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein the detection of pressure by the pressure sensitive film is performed by scanning for individual pressures on a plurality of pressure sensing segments. By providing a method for pressure detection by scanning for individual pressures on a plurality of pressure sensing segments, several individual pressures can be detected and located simultaneously by the predetermined positions of the pressure sensing segments. This allows for more precise control of the deformable segments.

[0026] According to another aspect of the invention a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls on a mobile electronic device is provided, wherein the method further comprises determining by a user or software application which pressure sensing segments and deformable segments that are active and deformation of said active deformable segments initiated by other means than detection of pressure on the pressure sensitive film. By allowing a user or software application to determine which pressure sensing segments and deformable segments that are active, the mobile electronic device can be customized depending on demand. For instance, if a user only wishes to use dynamic hardware controls on one side of the mobile electronic device, the user can choose to deactivate all other dynamic hardware controls i.e. all other pressure sensing segments and corresponding deformable segments, by selecting in the mobile electronic device which dynamic hardware controls that should be active. Furthermore can an application set a predetermined outlay of dynamic hardware controls, e.g. a game that demands a particular preset control outlay or a camera application that activates a particular trigger by activating a a particular dynamic hardware control. Furthermore, by enabling deformation of the active deformable segments by other means than detection of pressure on the pressure sensitive film, a user can easily locate the positions of the active deformable segments without having to physically press them to appear.

[0027] According to yet another aspect of the invention a method for controlling dynamic hardware controls on a mobile electronic device is provided wherein a user or

software may determine what software key input event that is to be executed when a certain dynamic hardware control is pressed with sufficient force to reach the pressure threshold. By providing a method where a user or software may adapt the software key input event that is executed by a certain dynamic hardware control, a high level of customization of the outlay of the dynamic hardware controls is achieved. A user or software may thereby choose the software key input event associated with each dynamic hardware control depending on situation or use case scenario.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0028] The present technique will be more readily understood through the study of the following detailed description of the embodiments/aspects together with the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 illustrates a front view of a mobile electronic device where the present invention is implemented.

Figure 2 illustrates a cross section of one side of a mobile electronic device where the present invention is implemented.

Figure 3 illustrates a cross section of one side of a mobile electronic device where the present invention is implemented.

Figure 4 illustrates a typical use case of the present invention.

Figure 5 illustrates a flowchart of a method for dynamically controlling at least one deformable segment.

[0029] It should be added that the following description of the embodiments is for illustration purposes only and should not be interpreted as limiting the disclosure exclusively to these embodiments/aspects.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0030] Embodiments of the present invention will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like reference signs refer to like elements throughout.

[0031] Embodiments of the present invention will be exemplified using a mobile electronic device such as a mobile phone. However, it should be appreciated that the invention is as such equally applicable to other elec-

tronic devices. Examples of such devices may for instance be any type of mobile phone, laptop (such as standard, ultra portables, netbooks, and micro laptops) handheld computers, portable digital assistants, tablet computers, gaming devices, accessories to mobile phones, etc.

[0032] Figure 1 illustrates a mobile electronic device 1 where the present invention is implemented.

[0033] The mobile electronic device 1 comprises a pressure sensing film 2 on at least one side of the mobile electronic device 1 for measuring pressure(s) on at least one portion of at least one side of the mobile electronic device 1. The pressure sensitive film 2 may be a capacitive pressure sensing film, a resistive pressure sensing film or the like, the technology of capacitive and resistive pressure sensing is known in the art and will not be described in further detail in this disclosure. The pressure sensitive film 2 may further comprise a plurality of pressure sensing segments 21, each being able to transmit and/or adapt a signal indicating a pressure on the segment 21 to a control unit 4. In one embodiment of the invention, the pressure sensing segments 21 are parallel plate capacitive pressure sensors. In a further embodiment of the invention, the pressure sensing segments 21 are resistive pressure sensors.

[0034] The mobile electronic device 1 further comprises an electroactive polymer film 3 that in one embodiment of the invention is positioned outside, overlaying and directly adjacent to the pressure sensitive film 2. The electroactive polymer may in one embodiment of the invention be e.g. an ionic electroactive polymer. The ionic electroactive polymer may comprise five layers, top and bottom being encapsulation, layer 2 and 4 is anode and cathode, which may be switchable, and in the middle the polymer. The electroactive polymer film may further comprise conjugated polymers used as actuator materials e.g. Polypyrrole(PPy), Polthiophene(PT), Polyethylenedioxythiophene (PEDOT) etc. In a further embodiment of the invention the electroactive polymer film 3 is positioned outside of the pressure sensitive film 2 with a separate light guide layer 7 arranged overlaying the electroactive polymer film directly adjacent to the electroactive polymer film 3. I.e. the electroactive polymer film 3 may in an embodiment of the invention be positioned below i.e. inside of a separate light guide layer 7.

[0035] The electroactive polymer film 3 further comprises an electrically conductive coating 9, preferably a metal coating 9, on at least one side of the electroactive polymer film 3. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, both sides of the electroactive polymer film 3 are coated with a conductive coating 9. In one embodiment, the coating may be a transparent conductive film being a metal mesh film with a low ohm/sq ratio.

[0036] Furthermore, the electroactive polymer film 3 comprises at least one, preferably a plurality, of deformable segments 5. A deformable segment is a segment that deforms by the application of a voltage that is applied over said deformable segment. By controlling the polarity

and voltage, both direction and degree of deformation or pressing resistance can be controlled.

[0037] The shape and outline of the deformable segments 5 are defined by their constraints, i.e. the deformable segments are formed in the electroactive polymer film 3 by a segment of the film 3 not being attached to an underlying layer and thereby allowing that segment to deform during an application of a voltage over the segment 5. Each deformable segment 5 further comprises individual connections for applying an individual voltage to each deformable segment 5. Preferably, the shape and outline of the deformable segments 5 is in the shape of a button dimensioned to be arranged on least one side of the mobile electronic device 1.

[0038] The deformable segment(s) 5 may be arranged such that they are positioned essentially aligned with a corresponding pressure sensing segment 21 to enable the pressure sensing segment 5 to transmit signals corresponding to a pressure on the deformable segment 5, thereby allowing the deformable segment 5 in combination with a underlying pressure sensing segment 21 to function as dynamic hardware controls 8 with the deformation of the deformable segments 5 being controlled by the control unit 4 in correspondence to a pressure on the deformable segment 5 that is detected by an underlying pressure sensing segment 21. The control unit 4, or processing circuitry 4 that may be constituted by any suitable Central Processing Unit, CPU, microcontroller, Digital Signal Processor, DSP, etc. capable of executing computer program code. The computer program may be stored in a memory 10. The memory 10 can be any combination of a Read And write Memory, RAM, and a Read Only Memory, ROM. The memory 10 may also comprise persistent storage, which, for example, can be any single one or combination of magnetic memory, optical memory, or solid state memory or even remotely mounted memory.

[0039] According to one aspect of the proposed technique, the deformable segments 5 are controlled directly by the control unit 4 without input signals from the pressure sensing segments 21, e.g. may the deformable segments 5 be activated by the user by input on a touch screen, physical button, proximity sensor etc to allow easy location of the dynamic hardware controls 8. At least one light source 6 may also be activated and deactivated essentially simultaneously as the deformable segments 5 are deformed to illuminate the deformed deformable segments 5.

[0040] According to one aspect of the proposed technique, the deformable segment(s) 5 are positioned outside of the immediate surroundings of pressure sensing segments 21, i.e. not aligned with each other, allowing them to function as tactile and/or visual indicators. A possible use scenario may be Braille writing, enabling a matrix with predetermined size and spacing of deformable segments 5 to deform individually according to a Braille letter or number as read to a user, changing letter either automatically or by input from a user.

[0041] According to one further aspect of the proposed technique, the electronic device 1 further comprises at least one light source 6, arranged such that the light produced may in an embodiment of the invention be guided in the electroactive polymer film 3, allowing the deformable segments 5, when deformed, to direct the light outwards and make the deformable segment 5 visible to a user. This is enabled by the electroactive polymer being transparent allowing light to be guided. In another embodiment of the invention the electronic device may comprise a separate light guide layer 7 arranged outside of and adjacent to the electroactive polymer film 3, being attached to the electroactive polymer film 3. The light guide layer 7 may be any type of material being transparent and flexible, e.g. PC or PMMA, such that bending of the layer according to the deformation of the deformable segments 5 is possible.

[0042] According to a further aspect of the proposed technique, the electroactive polymer film 3 further comprises perforations in at least the outer conductive coating layer 9 to allow light to pass through when the deformable segments 5 are deformed. The perforations may be in the shape of slits, circles, squares or any suitable shape for indicating and illuminating a location of a deformed deformable segment 5 to a user. The perforations may also be small enough not be detectable by a user, but still letting enough light pass through when the light source 6 is activated to illuminate a deformed deformable segment 5 to a user. In a further embodiment, the perforations may also be dimensioned such that when the deformable segments 5 are in a non deformed state, the perforations remain closed and opens when the deformable segments 5 are deformed through the expansion of the deformable segments 5 and thereby not letting any light escape when in the non deformed state and opening to let light out when deformed.

[0043] Figure 2 illustrates a cross section of a portion of one side of the mobile electronic device 1 showing a dynamic hardware control 8 comprising a deformable segment 5 in a deformed state i.e. when a voltage is applied to the deformable segment 5. The required voltage for deformation of the deformable segment 5 is low, well within what is achievable in a conventional mobile electronic device 1, and variation of the voltage is interpreted into varying amounts of deformation or pressure resistance in the deformable segment 5 i.e. a low voltage results in a soft button/small deformation and a higher voltage results in a harder button/larger deformation. The control unit 4 is shown being connected to both the deformable segment 5 and the pressure sensing segment 21 enabling the control unit 4 to adapt the voltage applied to an individual deformable segment 5 in correspondence to a pressure detected by an individual underlying pressure sensing segment 21. Only one deformable segment 5 and pressure sensitive segment 21 is shown but it is to be understood that a plurality of pressure sensing segments 21 and/or deformable segments 5 may be connected to the control unit 4 and being controlled to oper-

ate simultaneously independent of each other.

[0044] The deformation of the deformable segment 5 redirects the light 61 that is guided through the electroactive polymer film 3 enabling it to escape out of the electroactive polymer film 3 through the perforations 31 in the conductive coating 9.

[0045] Figure 3 illustrates a cross section of a portion of one side of the mobile electronic device 1 showing a dynamic hardware control 8 according to another embodiment of the invention comprising a deformable segment 5 in a deformed state and wherein the mobile electronic device further comprises a separate light guide layer 7 attached to the outside of and adjacent to the electroactive polymer film 3 and functioning as a dedicated light guide being transparent and flexible enabling it to deform according to the deformation of the deformable segment 5. Preferably, the light guide layer 7 is a transparent polymer e.g. PC or PMMA. When deformed, the light is redirected and can escape through the outer surface of the light guide layer 7 and become visible to a user. The light guide layer 7 may in one embodiment comprise perforations in an outer layer, enabling light to pass through to a user.

[0046] Figure 4 illustrates a cross section of a portion of one side of the mobile electronic device 1 and a dynamic hardware control 8 during a typical use case scenario of the present invention. In a) the electroactive polymer film 3 is active and in an idle mode, scanning for a pressure on the pressure sensing segment 21. The scanning is performed at a certain frequency depending on the mode of the mobile electronic device 1 and amount of segments 21 to be scanned. In a further embodiment, the scanning frequency when active varies between 5 to 10 Hz. For instance, if the mobile electronic device 1 is in a battery saving mode the scanning may be performed at a lower frequency and thereby optimizing battery time. If an object e.g. a finger or a stylus is detected, the frequency can be increased to achieve higher precision in the control of the voltage applied over the deformable segment 5. If the mobile electronic device 1 is in a rest mode or locked mode, scanning can be switched off completely. In b), an object is detected by the pressure sensing segment 21 and a voltage is instantly applied to the corresponding deformable segment 5. Simultaneously as the detection of a pressure is the at least one light source 6 switched on, providing light that is redirected by the deformed deformable segment 5 and thereby becomes visible to a user and indicating an active dynamic hardware control 8. In c), the user has recognized the dynamic hardware control 8 and provides a pressure on the upper surface of said dynamic hardware control 8. The pressure is scanned by the pressure sensing segment 21 and compared to a pressure threshold. If the pressure exceeds the threshold value, which value can be varied by software or a user, the deformable segment 5 is reset, as in d), to a non deformed state by removal of the voltage to the deformable segment 5. In one embodiment of the invention, the polarity of the voltage ap-

plied to the deformable segment 5 may be reversed for enhanced and faster resetting a deformed deformable segment. Following or simultaneously as the resetting occurs, a software key input event is executed to perform a task that is associated with said dynamic hardware control 8. The pressure threshold may in one embodiment of the invention be varied such that between 1 Newton and 15 Newton of equivalent force on the dynamic hardware control 8 is required to reset it. The light source 6 may in one embodiment of the invention be switched off simultaneously. If the pressure is maintained after the reset of the deformable segment 5, the software key input event may be executed repeatedly/continuously until the pressure is removed.

[0047] Furthermore may the software key input event associated with a dynamic hardware control 8 be controlled and altered by a user or an application/program on the mobile electronic device 1. If the user e.g. wants to be able to raise the volume of a speaker on the mobile electronic device by pressing a certain portion on the side of the mobile electronic device 1, the user may associate the dynamic hardware control 8 at that portion with the software key input event of raising the volume. Another example is when using a camera application in the mobile electronic device, the trigger function may be associated to a particular dynamic hardware control 8 by determining how the mobile electronic device 1 is oriented, e.g. by use of an accelerometer and/or gyroscope, and thereby activating a dynamic hardware control 8 on a side of the mobile electronic device 1 facing upwards and associating it with software key input event of a trigger function of the camera function.

[0048] Figure 5 illustrates a flowchart of a method for controlling for controlling dynamic hardware controls according to the present invention. The method is implemented in a mobile electronic device when the mobile electronic device is in an active mode for receiving input from a user. Step 1, S1, includes detecting a pressure through scanning of the pressure sensitive film 2, by the control unit 4 receiving signals from the pressure sensitive film 2 corresponding to a pressure on the pressure sensitive film 2 in order to detect contact by an object. Scanning may be performed by detecting changes in capacitance and/or resistance or the like in a single pressure sensitive segment 21. In one embodiment of the invention, capacitive parallel plate sensors are used for the detection of pressures. The scanning may further be controlled by a user or software application executed by the control unit 4 to only scan for pressures on selected active pressure sensing segments 21. The pressure sensing segments 21 are positioned in predetermined positions on at least one side of the mobile electronic device 1, enabling the user or software application to select which position(s) and corresponding portions of at least one side of the mobile electronic device 1 to be active for generation of dynamic hardware controls 8.

[0049] Step 2, S2, comprises activating at least one light source 6 to illuminate the deformable segment(s) 5.

By activating the light source 6, the deformable segment(s) 5 will be illuminated immediately as they deform.

[0050] Step 3, S3, includes controlling temporary deformation of at least one deformable segment 5 by the control unit 4 interpreting signals from the pressure sensing film 2 to dynamically apply and control a voltage, as a response to the detected pressure. The controlling is performed by measuring a change in capacitance and/or resistance over a pressure sensing segment 21, first to indicate that an object is in contact with the mobile electronic device 1 at the predetermined position of the pressure sensing segment 21 that has detected said change, after which the control unit 4 controls the voltage over the deformable segment 5 to achieve the desired deformation. The voltage required for deforming a deformable segment 5 in an electroactive polymer film is low making it easily achievable within the mobile electronic device 1. The voltage may be applied according to a software setting, user preference or to the pressure detected by the pressure sensing segment 21.

[0051] Step 4, S4, comprises resetting said deformable segment 5 to a non deformed state by removing the applied voltage, when the control unit 4 has determined that a pressure threshold is reached based on the received signals from the pressure sensing film 2. By analyzing the change in capacitance and/or resistance over a pressure sensing segment 21 in the pressure sensing film 2, the control unit 4 may determine that the threshold is reached and thereby remove the applied voltage to the corresponding deformable segment 5. The voltage may be removed instantly or gradually over a predetermined time to simulate the pressing of a mechanical button. The polarity of the applied voltage may in one embodiment of the invention be reversed for a short period of time in order to achieve a faster resetting of the deformable segment 5.

[0052] Step 5, S5, comprises executing a software key input event in said mobile electronic device 1 directly after or simultaneously as the removal of the applied voltage to the deformable segment 5. Step 6, S6, comprises executing said software key input continuously if the pressure that is detected by the pressure sensitive film 2 is maintained after the resetting of the deformable segment 5 until the pressure is removed. The software key input event may be any input recognizable by the control unit 4 and may be determined by a software application or a user in advance. For instance, a user may want to change the physical position of the dynamic hardware control associated with an "increase volume" software key input event to make it easier to reach. The user may then select, in the user interface of the mobile electronic device 1, another position for that software key input event by associating a dynamic hardware control at a desired position with the software key input event of increasing the volume.

[0053] Step 7, S7, comprises deactivating the at least one light source 6 following the resetting of the deformable segment 5.

[0054] The disclosure is not limited to the specific flow-chart presented, but includes all variations within the scope of the present claims.

[0055] As will be realized, the disclosure is capable of modification in various obvious respects, all without departing from the scope of the appended claims. Accordingly, the drawings and the description thereto are to be regarded as illustrative in nature, and not restrictive.

Claims

1. A mobile electronic device (1) comprising:

- a pressure sensing film (2) arranged to detect a pressure applied on at least one portion of at least one side of the mobile electronic device (1),
- an electroactive polymer film (3), with a conductive coating (9), arranged overlaying the pressure sensing film (2) comprising at least one segment not being attached to the pressure sensing film (2) thereby forming at least one deformable segment (5) configured to be temporarily deformed by the application of a voltage over the at least one deformable segment (5) in the electroactive polymer film (3), and
- a control unit (4) configured to interpret signals associated with the detected pressure, received from the pressure sensing film (2) and to control the voltage applied over said at least one deformable segment (5), **characterized in that**
 - the control unit (4) is configured to control the deformation of said at least one deformable segment (5) as a function of the applied pressure detected by the pressure sensing film (2),
 - the electroactive polymer film is transparent, and configured to function as a light guide for at least one light source (6) comprised within the mobile electronic device (1) in order to illuminate the at least one deformable segment (5), and
 - the at least one deformable segment (5) in the electroactive polymer film (3), when deformed, is configured to redirect the light outwards at an angle against the outer surface of the electroactive polymer that enables light to escape out of the electroactive polymer film (3).

2. A mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 1, wherein the pressure sensitive film (2) comprises a plurality of pressure sensing segments (21) each segment being configured to detect an individual pressure on a predetermined portion of a side of the mobile electronic device (1) and wherein the electroactive polymer film (3) comprises a plurality of deformable segments (5).
3. A mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 2, wherein each pressure sensing segment (21) is a

parallel plate capacitor or a resistive sensor configured to detect a contact pressure of an object being in contact with a portion of the mobile electronic device (1).

4. A mobile electronic device (1) according to claims 2 to 3, wherein a plurality of the deformable segments (5) are arranged in desired positions on at least one side of the mobile electronic device (1) aligned with positions of underlying corresponding pressure sensing segments (21) and wherein the deformable segments (5) are arranged to individually deform such that they together with underlying pressure sensing segments (21) form dynamic hardware controls (8) on at least one side of the mobile electronic device (1).
5. A mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 4, wherein each deformable segment (5) is dimensioned to be smaller than an underlying corresponding pressure sensing segment (21).
6. A mobile electronic device (1) according to any one of claims 1-5, wherein each deformable segment (5) in the electroactive polymer film (3) comprises at least one perforation (31) in at least an outer conductive coating layer (9) configured to let light to escape through the conductive coating layer (9) and become visible to a user.
7. Method for controlling dynamic hardware controls (8) on a mobile electronic device (1) as defined in any one of claims 1-6, wherein the method comprises the step of:
 - detecting a pressure through scanning of the pressure sensitive film (2), by the control unit (4) receiving signals from the pressure sensitive film (2) corresponding to a pressure on the pressure sensitive film (2) in order to detect contact by an object,

said method being **characterized by**

- controlling temporary deformation of at least one deformable segment (5) by the control unit (4) interpreting signals from the pressure sensing film (2) to dynamically apply and control a voltage, as a response to the detected pressure,
- resetting said at least one deformable segment (5) to a non deformed state by removing the applied voltage, when the control unit (4) has determined that a pressure threshold is reached based on the received signals from the pressure sensing film (2),
- executing a software key input event in said mobile electronic device (1) directly after or simultaneously as the removal of the applied volt-

- age, and
 - switching on the light source (6) to illuminate the at least one deformable segment (5) when the at least one deformable segment (5) is deformed and switching off the light source (6) when the at least one deformable segment is reset.
8. Method for controlling dynamic hardware controls (8) on a mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 7, wherein the method further comprises:
- executing said software key input continuously if the pressure that is detected by the pressure sensitive film (2) is maintained after the resetting of the deformable segment (5) until the pressure is removed.
9. Method for controlling dynamic hardware controls (8) on a mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 7, wherein the detection of pressure by the pressure sensitive film (2) is performed by scanning for individual pressures on a plurality of pressure sensing segments (21).
10. Method for controlling dynamic hardware controls (8) on a mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 9, wherein the method further comprises determining by a user or software application which pressure sensing segments (21) and deformable segments (5) that are active and deformation of said active deformable segments (5) initiated by other means than detection of pressure on the pressure sensitive film (2).
11. Method for controlling dynamic hardware controls (8) on a mobile electronic device (1) according to claim 7, wherein a user or software may determine what software key input event that is to be executed when a certain dynamic hardware control (8) is pressed with sufficient force to reach the pressure threshold.

Patentansprüche

1. Mobiles elektronisches Gerät (1), umfassend:
- einen Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2), der zum Detektieren eines Drucks angeordnet ist, der auf mindestens einen Abschnitt von mindestens einer Seite des mobilen elektronischen Geräts (1) ausgeübt wird,
 - einen elektroaktiven Polymerfilm (3) mit einer leitfähigen Beschichtung (9), die über dem Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2) liegend angeordnet ist, umfassend mindestens ein Segment, welches nicht an dem Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2) befestigt ist, wodurch mindestens ein ver-

formbares Segment (5) gebildet wird, welches so ausgestaltet ist, dass es durch Anlegen einer Spannung über dem mindestens einen verformbaren Segment (5) in dem elektroaktiven Polymerfilm (3) zeitweilig verformt wird, und

- eine Steuereinheit (4), die ausgestaltet ist, um mit dem detektierten Druck verknüpfte Signale zu interpretieren, die von dem Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2) empfangen wurden, und die über das mindestens eine verformbare Segment (5) angelegte Spannung zu steuern, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass**

- die Steuereinheit (4) ausgestaltet ist, um die Verformung des mindestens einen verformbaren Segments (5) als Funktion des ausgeübten Drucks zu steuern, der durch den Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2) detektiert wird,

- wobei der elektroaktive Polymerfilm transparent ist und ausgestaltet ist, um als Lichtleiter für mindestens eine Lichtquelle (6) zu fungieren, die in dem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) enthalten ist, um das mindestens eine verformbare Segment (5) zu beleuchten, und

- das mindestens eine verformbare Segment (5) in dem elektroaktiven Polymerfilm (3), wenn es verformt wird, ausgestaltet ist, um das Licht in einem Winkel auswärts gegen die Außenseite des elektroaktiven Polymers umzulenken, welches Licht ermöglicht, aus dem elektroaktiven Polymerfilm (3) zu entweichen.

2. Mobiles elektronisches Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 1, wobei der druckempfindliche Film (2) eine Vielzahl von Druckwahrnehmungssegmenten (21) umfasst, wobei jedes Segment ausgestaltet ist, um einen individuellen Druck auf einem vorbestimmten Abschnitt einer Seite des mobilen elektronischen Geräts (1) zu detektieren, und wobei der elektroaktive Polymerfilm (3) eine Vielzahl verformbarer Segmente (5) umfasst.

3. Mobiles elektronisches Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 2, wobei jedes Druckwahrnehmungssegment (21) ein paralleler Plattenkondensator oder ein resistiver Sensor ist, der ausgestaltet ist, um einen Kontaktdruck eines Objekts zu detektieren, das in Kontakt mit einem Abschnitt des mobilen elektronischen Geräts (1) ist.

4. Mobiles elektronisches Gerät (1) nach den Ansprüchen 2 bis 3, wobei eine Vielzahl der verformbaren Segmente (5) in gewünschten Positionen auf mindestens einer Seite des mobilen elektronischen Geräts (1) angeordnet ist, die mit Positionen von darunter befindlichen entsprechenden Druckwahrnehmungssegmenten (21) ausgerichtet sind, und wobei die verformbaren Segmente (5) angeordnet sind, um sich individuell zu verformen, so dass sie zusammen

mit darunter befindlichen Druckwahrnehmungssegmenten (21) dynamische Hardware-Steuerelemente (8) auf mindestens einer Seite des mobilen elektronischen Geräts (1) bilden.

5. Mobiles elektronisches Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 4, wobei jedes verformbare Segment (5) so bemessen ist, dass es kleiner als ein darunter befindliches entsprechendes Druckwahrnehmungssegment (21) ist.

6. Mobiles elektronisches Gerät (1) nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5, wobei jedes verformbare Segment (5) in dem elektroaktiven Polymerfilm (3) mindestens eine Perforation (31) in mindestens einer äußeren leitfähigen Beschichtungsschicht (9) umfasst, die ausgestaltet ist, um Licht durch die leitfähige Beschichtungsschicht (9) hindurch entweichen zu lassen und für einen Benutzer sichtbar zu werden.

7. Verfahren zum Steuern dynamischer Hardware-Steuerelemente (8) auf einem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) wie in einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6 definiert, wobei das Verfahren den Schritt umfasst:

- Detektieren eines Drucks mittels Scannen des druckempfindlichen Films (2) durch die Steuereinheit (4), indem Signale von dem druckempfindlichen Film (2) empfangen werden, die einem Druck auf dem druckempfindlichen Film (2) entsprechen, um Kontakt durch ein Objekt zu detektieren,

wobei das Verfahren **gekennzeichnet ist durch**

- Steuern von zeitweiliger Verformung von mindestens einem verformbaren Segment (5), indem die Steuereinheit (4) Signale von dem Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2) interpretiert, um dynamisch eine Spannung in Reaktion auf den detektierten Druck anzulegen und zu steuern, - Zurücksetzen des mindestens einen verformbaren Segments (5) auf einen nicht-verformten Zustand, indem die angelegte Spannung entfernt wird, wenn die Steuereinheit (4) basierend auf den empfangenen Signalen von dem Druckwahrnehmungsfilm (2) bestimmt hat, dass ein Druckschwellenwert erreicht worden ist, - Ausführen eines Softwareasteneingabeereignisses in dem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) direkt nach oder gleichzeitig mit der Entfernung der angelegten Spannung, und - Einschalten der Lichtquelle (6), um das mindestens eine verformbare Segment (5) zu beleuchten, wenn das mindestens eine verformbare Segment (5) verformt wird, und Abschalten der Lichtquelle (6), wenn das mindestens eine verformbare Segment zurückgesetzt wird.

8. Verfahren zum Steuern von dynamischen Hardware-Steuerelementen (8) auf einem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 7, wobei das Verfahren ferner umfasst:

- kontinuierliches Ausführen der Softwareasteneingabe, falls der Druck, der durch den druckempfindlichen Film (2) detektiert wird, nach dem Zurücksetzen des verformbaren Segments (5) aufrechterhalten wird, bis der Druck entfernt wird.

9. Verfahren zum Steuern von dynamischen Hardware-Steuerelementen (8) auf einem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 7, wobei die Detektierung des Drucks durch den druckempfindlichen Film (2) mittels Scannen der individuellen Drücke auf einer Vielzahl von Druckwahrnehmungssegmenten (21) durchgeführt wird.

10. Verfahren zum Steuern von dynamischen Hardware-Steuerelementen (8) auf einem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 9, wobei das Verfahren ferner Bestimmung, welche Druckwahrnehmungssegmente (21) und verformbaren Segmente (5), die aktiv sind, und Verformung der aktiven verformbaren Segmente (5) durch andere Mittel als Detektierung von Druck auf dem druckempfindlichen Film (2) initiiert worden sind, durch einen Benutzer oder eine Softwareapplikation umfasst.

11. Verfahren zum Steuern von dynamischen Hardware-Steuerelementen (8) auf einem mobilen elektronischen Gerät (1) nach Anspruch 7, wobei ein Benutzer oder eine Software bestimmen kann, welches Softwareasteneingabeereignis ausgeführt werden soll, wenn ein bestimmtes dynamisches Hardware-Steuerelement (8) mit ausreichender Kraft gedrückt worden ist, um den Druckschwellenwert zu erreichen.

Revendications

1. Dispositif électronique mobile (1) comprenant :

- un film de détection de pression (2) agencé pour détecter une pression appliquée sur au moins une partie d'au moins un côté du dispositif électronique mobile (1),
- un film polymère électroactif (3), avec un revêtement conducteur (9), disposé en recouvrement du film de détection de pression (2), comprenant au moins un segment non attaché au film de détection de pression (2), formant ainsi au moins un segment déformable (5) configuré pour être temporairement déformé par l'application d'une tension sur l'au moins un segment

- déformable (5) dans le film polymère électroactif (3), et
- une unité de commande (4) configurée pour interpréter des signaux associés à la pression détectée, reçus depuis le film de détection de pression (2), et pour contrôler la tension appliquée sur ledit au moins un segment déformable (5), **caractérisé en ce que**
 - l'unité de commande (4) est configurée pour contrôler la déformation dudit au moins un segment déformable (5) en fonction de la pression appliquée détectée par le film de détection de pression (2),
 - le film polymère électroactif est transparent, et configuré pour fonctionner comme un conduit de lumière pour au moins une source de lumière (6) incorporée à l'intérieur du dispositif électronique mobile (1) afin d'éclairer l'au moins un segment déformable (5), et
 - l'au moins un segment déformable (5) dans le film polymère électroactif (3), quand il est déformé, est configuré pour rediriger la lumière vers l'extérieur à un angle par rapport à la surface externe du polymère électroactif qui permet à la lumière de s'échapper du film polymère électroactif (3) .
2. Dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 1, dans lequel le film sensible à la pression (2) comprend une pluralité de segments de détection de pression (21), chaque segment étant configuré pour détecter une pression individuelle sur une partie prédéterminée d'un côté du dispositif électronique mobile (1), et dans lequel le film polymère électroactif (3) comprend une pluralité de segments déformables (5).
3. Dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 2, dans lequel chaque segment de détection de pression (21) est un condensateur à plaques parallèles ou un capteur résistif configuré pour détecter une pression de contact d'un objet qui est en contact avec une partie du dispositif électronique mobile (1).
4. Dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon les revendications 2 à 3, dans lequel une pluralité des segments déformables (5) sont disposés à des positions souhaitées sur au moins un côté du dispositif électronique mobile (1) alignées avec des positions de segments de détection de pression (21) sous-jacents correspondants, et dans lequel les segments déformables (5) sont agencés pour se déformer individuellement de telle sorte qu'ils forment, conjointement avec les segments de détection de pression (21) sous-jacents, des commandes matérielles dynamiques (8) sur au moins un côté du dispositif électronique mobile (1).

5. Dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 4, dans lequel chaque segment déformable (5) est dimensionné pour être plus petit qu'un segment de détection de pression (21) sous-jacent correspondant.

6. Dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel chaque segment déformable (5) dans le film polymère électroactif (3) comprend au moins une perforation (31) dans au moins une couche de revêtement conducteur externe (9) configurée pour laisser la lumière s'échapper à travers la couche de revêtement conducteur (9) et devenir visible pour un utilisateur.

7. Procédé de contrôle de commandes matérielles dynamiques (8) sur un dispositif électronique mobile (1) tel que défini dans l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 6, le procédé comprenant l'étape de :

- détection d'une pression par balayage du film sensible à la pression (2), par l'unité de commande (4) qui reçoit des signaux provenant du film sensible à la pression (2) correspondant à une pression sur le film sensible à la pression (2) afin de détecter un contact par un objet,

ledit procédé étant **caractérisé par**

- le contrôle d'une déformation temporaire d'au moins un segment déformable (5) par l'unité de commande (4) qui interprète des signaux provenant du film de détection de pression (2) pour appliquer et contrôler dynamiquement une tension, en réponse à la pression détectée,
- la réinitialisation dudit au moins un segment déformable (5) vers un état non déformé par retrait de la tension appliquée, quand l'unité de commande (4) a déterminé qu'un seuil de pression est atteint sur la base des signaux reçus depuis le film de détection de pression (2),
- l'exécution d'un événement d'entrée de clé logique dans ledit dispositif électronique mobile (1) juste après ou simultanément au retrait de la tension appliquée, et
- l'allumage de la source de lumière (6) pour éclairer l'au moins un segment déformable (5) quand l'au moins un segment déformable (5) est déformé et l'extinction de la source de lumière (6) quand l'au moins un segment déformable est réinitialisé.

8. Procédé de contrôle de commandes matérielles dynamiques (8) sur un dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 7, le procédé comprenant en outre :

- l'exécution continue de ladite entrée de clé lo-

gicielle si la pression qui est détectée par le film sensible à la pression (2) est maintenue après la réinitialisation du segment déformable (5) jusqu'à ce que la pression soit retirée.

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9. Procédé de contrôle de commandes matérielles dynamiques (8) sur un dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 7, dans lequel la détection d'une pression par le film sensible à la pression (2) est effectuée par balayage pour des pressions individuelles sur une pluralité de segments de détection de pression (21). 10
10. Procédé de contrôle de commandes matérielles dynamiques (8) sur un dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 9, le procédé comprenant en outre la détermination par un utilisateur ou une application logicielle des segments de détection de pression (21) et des segments déformables (5) qui sont actifs et de la déformation desdits segments déformables (5) actifs initiée par d'autres moyens que la détection d'une pression sur le film sensible à la pression (2). 15 20
11. Procédé de contrôle de commandes matérielles dynamiques (8) sur un dispositif électronique mobile (1) selon la revendication 7, dans lequel un utilisateur ou un logiciel peut déterminer l'événement d'entrée de clé logicielle qui doit être exécuté quand une certaine commande matérielle dynamique (8) est activée par pression avec suffisamment de force pour atteindre le seuil de pression. 25 30

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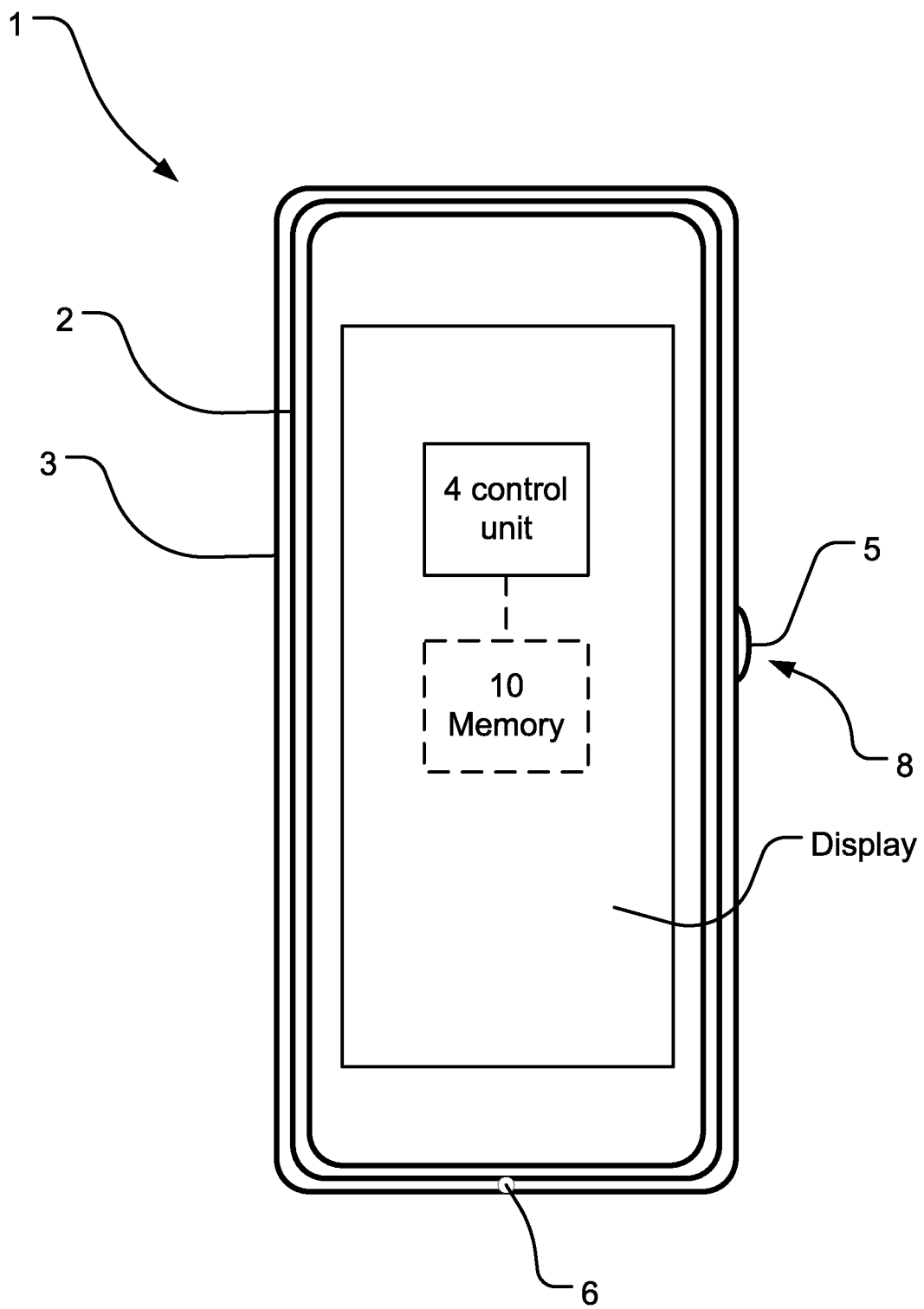


Fig. 1

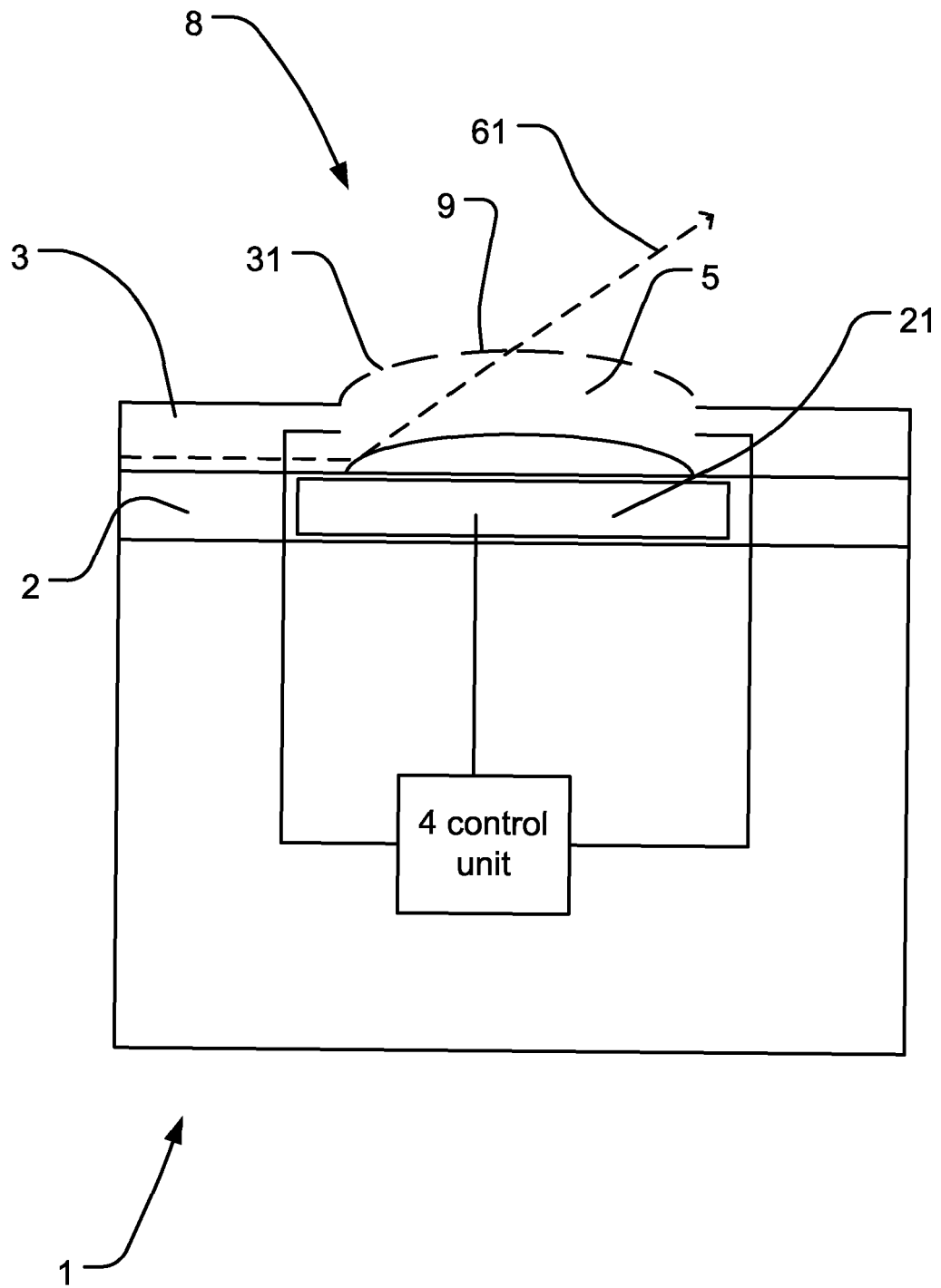


Fig. 2

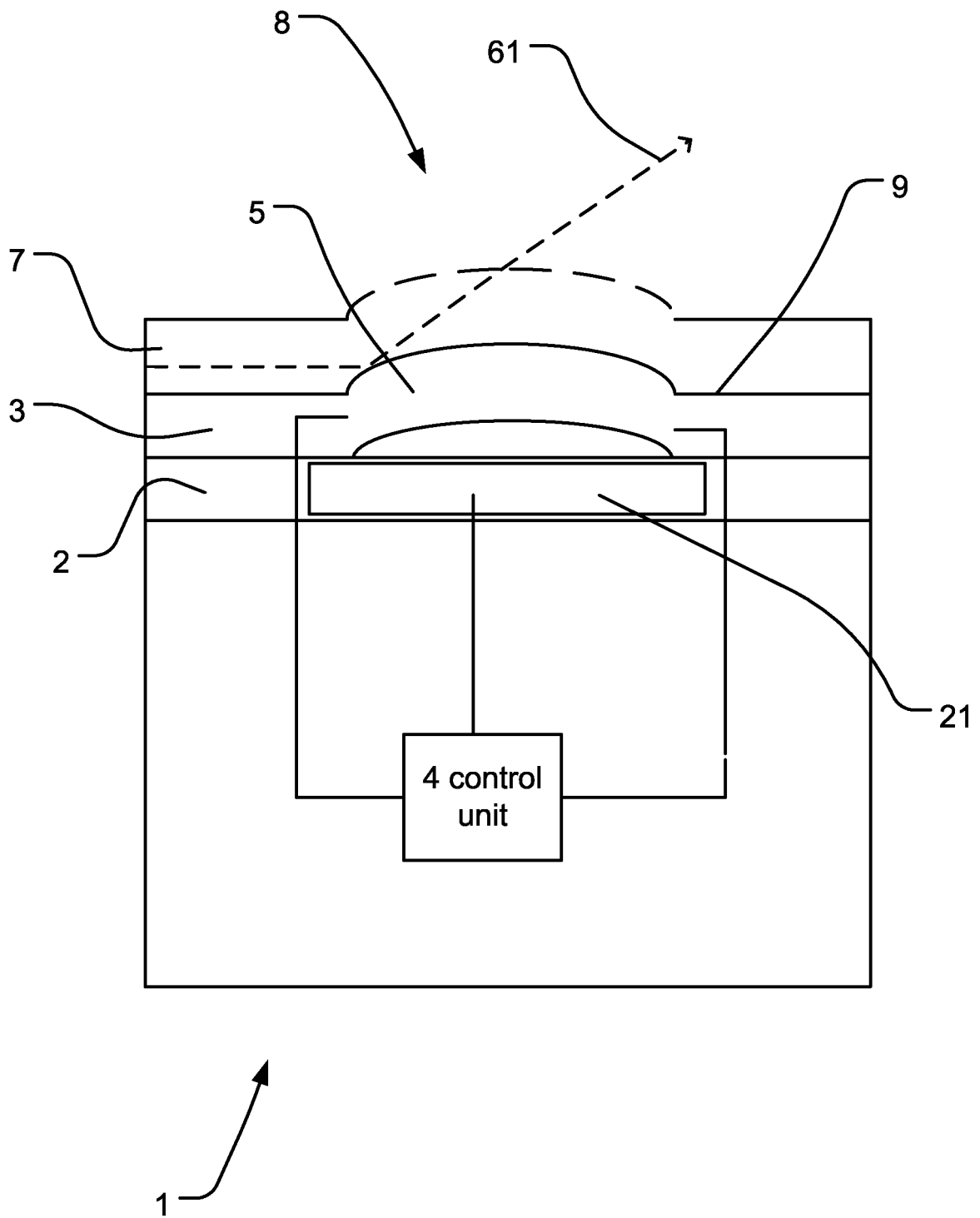


Fig. 3

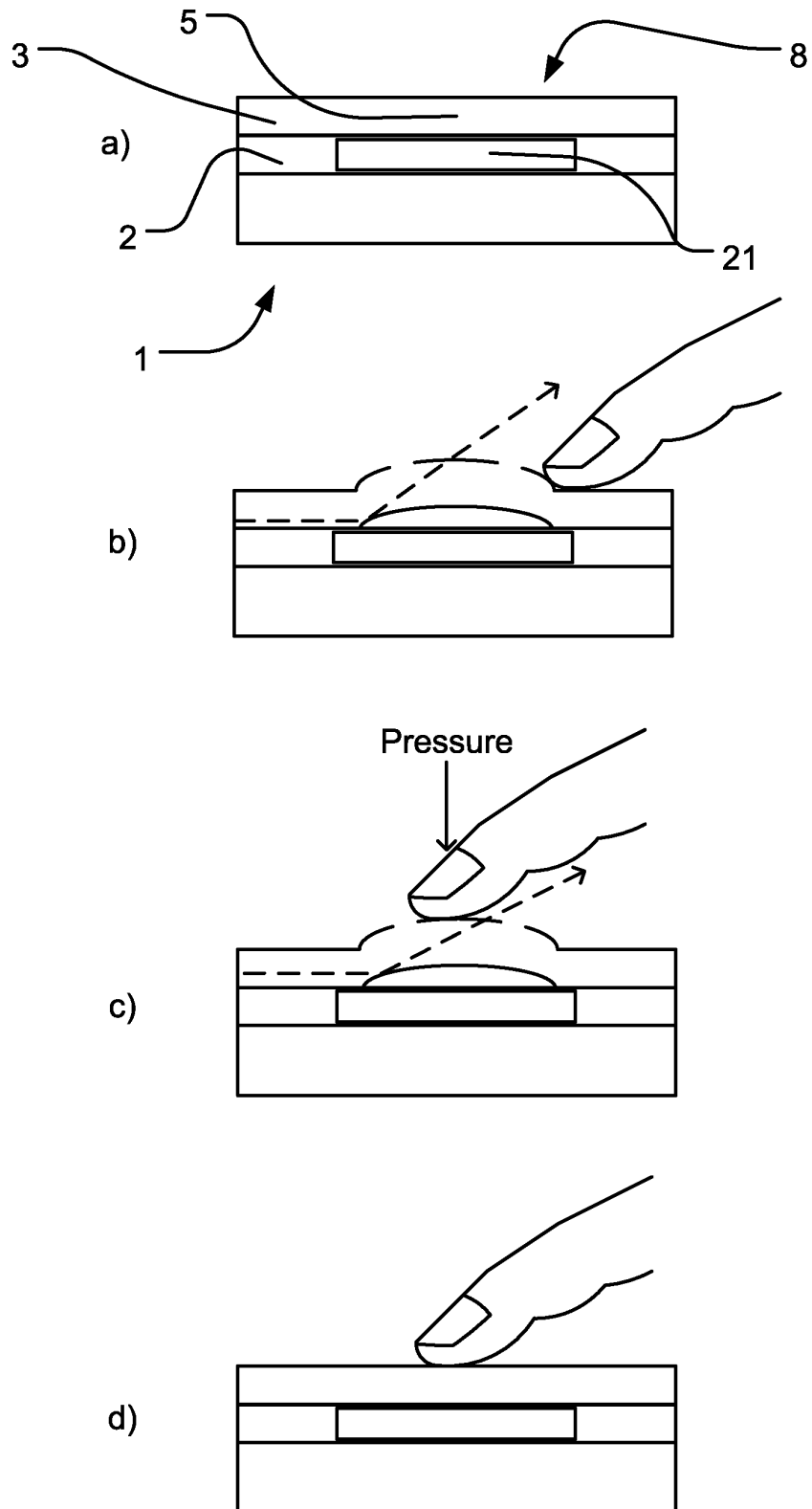


Fig. 4

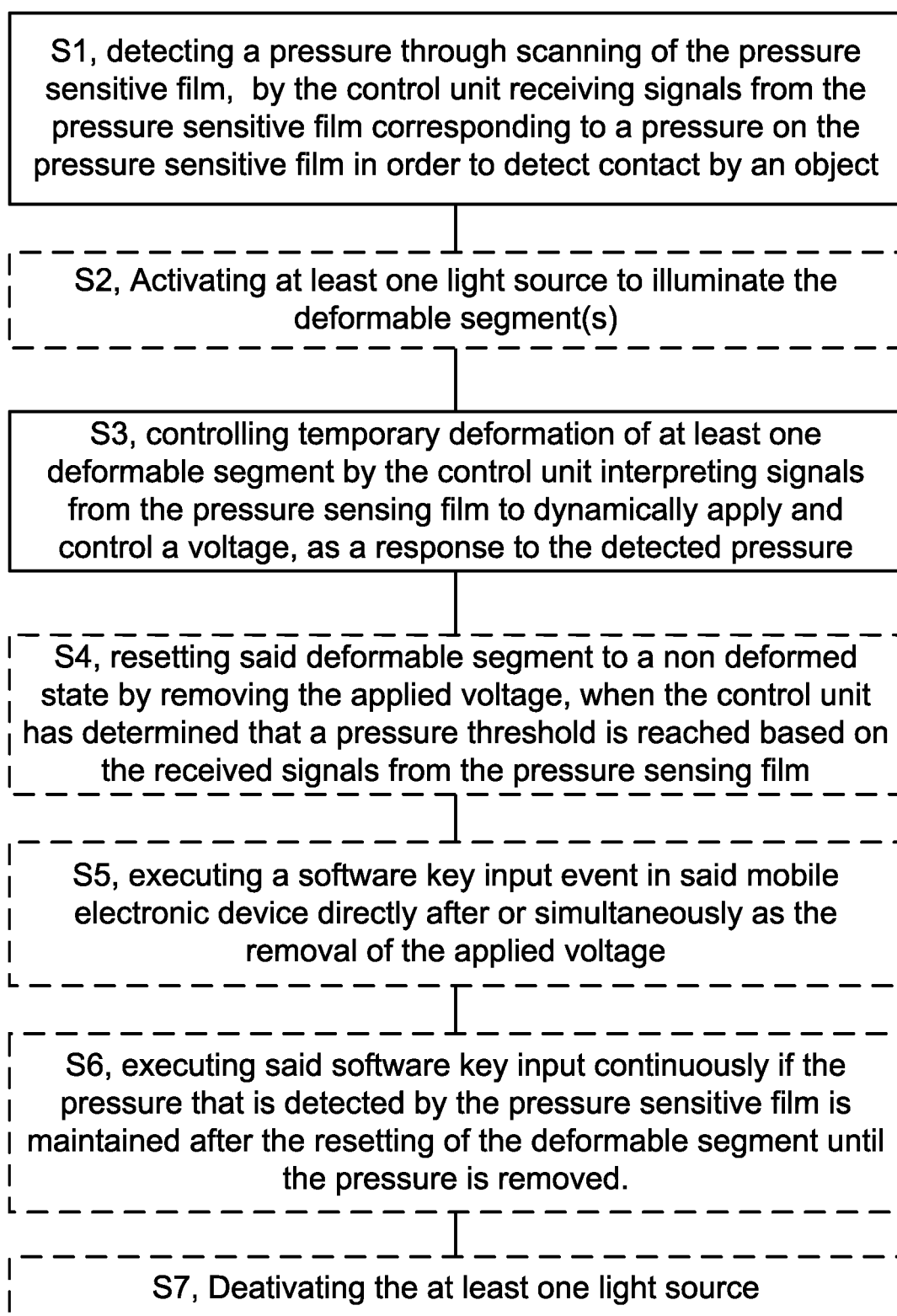


Fig. 5

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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